

## **Icarus (or, The Other Ways We Fall)**

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# Icarus (or, The Other Ways We Fall)

by [dazzlingsuns](#)

## Summary

Jack finds it's hard to draw neat bounds around the amorphous object that is their entanglement. Samira says the trouble began when he kissed her breathless behind a tree at Heather and Robby's wedding. He doesn't know how to tell her it was likely the first time he saw her in the damn parking lot.

AKA, the Mohabbot situationship fic.

## Notes

Just a heads up that there's some descriptions of car accidents/a child's death, it's nothing gory or very long, but if that's not for you, please click away!!

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

They don't date.

It's not who they are. Never has been.

Except that's nothing but the first few notes of a bold-faced lie, isn't it? Because however much Jack would like to forget it, he's been that man before. He's done it all– the blush-colored roses, breakfast in bed, long walks on the beach. He's got the ring and half-healed heart to show for it.

Samira's never asked it of him, but she never asks much of anyone. He'd feel worse, if he was certain it was what she wanted, but most days he's just left guessing. She comes and goes as she pleases and Jack doesn't really stop to ask questions. He doesn't want to open the floodgates, to think too hard about the fact that this kind-hearted, brilliant being chooses this, because if he does, he'll only want her that much more.

And wanting has never ended well for him.

Some nights, when the last rays of moonlight filter through his blinds and she's wrapped up in his arms, he tries to pinpoint the moment it all became so complicated. As her chest rises and falls against his own, Jack finds it's hard to draw neat bounds around the amorphous object that is their entanglement.

Samira says the trouble began when he kissed her breathless behind a tree at Heather and Robby's wedding.

He doesn't know how to tell her it was likely the first time he saw her in the damn parking lot without sounding ridiculous. Instead, he opts for when they first became friends, bonding over case study exchanges and conversations so engrossing their French fries go cold.

"We were never friends, Jack," she laughs, throwing her head back, curls bouncing with life.

"Well, you don't just jump from colleagues to..."

"To what?" she asks, because of course she does.

He gestures wildly, "This."

"Very eloquent, Dr. Abbot."

"You have a better word?"

She pauses, as if to think. “I think ‘this,’” she mirrors his gesturing, “is perfect.”

\*

Robby texts him a link, no message attached. For a moment he wonders if it's a phishing scam, but then remembers Robby's technological illiteracy and clicks into an album he recognizes as photos from the wedding. It was a beautiful ceremony at the botanical gardens— evening birds chipping sweet melodies as the sunset gave way to a boozy reception dinner.

He was uncharacteristically nervous that day. Jack could intubate with his eyes closed but giving a best man's speech felt a little beyond his wheelhouse. He preferred to leave the public speaking to Robby when he could. It didn't help that Samira Mohan was wandering the premises looking fucking ethereal in her blue, silk bridesmaid dress, preventing him from concentrating on anything.

He swipes through a few of the photos— there's Heather and Robby laughing, a candid of him and Robby chatting on a bench— and then the second text comes.

**Robby:** Brother, you are one lucky bastard that Heather caught this before we sent out the link.

**Robby:** Also, seriously? At our wedding?

It's a screenshot of a high angle photo, taken from above. He recognizes the swarm of doctors dancing under the stars and on its face, he can't tell what the issue is. Sure, there's some bad dancing and arms strewn about and then he remembers exactly what *his* arms were doing at that moment and he freezes. He zooms into the upper corner of the photo and sure enough, a distance away from the crowd, there's Samira backed up against a tree and with his lips on her neck. It's pretty blurry, but recognizable enough that a lump forms in his throat.

(He notes she's beautiful, even when extremely pixelated.)

**Abbot:** When the hell did you get a surveillance drone at the wedding?

**Robby:** You're the one who called in a favor with one of your ex-Army buddies to do the photography on such short notice. He threw in the shots for free. Turns out military-grade drones are both silent

and invisible to the naked eye.

**Robby:** This is the most PG-photo, by the way. Heather deleted the rest of them before I got to it. Said it was best for my mental health.

In Jack Abbot's defense, he really tried not to fuck her against a tree.

Keyword: *tried* .

**Abbot:** Your wife has good sense and eagle eyes, apparently.

Robby doesn't say more on the topic and instead switches gears to complaining about Gloria's latest budget cuts. Abbot imagines whatever lecture Robby's drafted and re-drafted in his head just reads as hypocritical. He also imagines Robby knows whatever he has to say, Abbot's already considered, twice.

When shift trade off finally rolls around in the morning, he still braces himself for impact, but nothing comes. It's only when he comes back the next evening that he finds the hot pink sticky note on his locker in Heather's perfect cursive reading: "Do I even need to tell you they'll never find your body?"

Jack receives the message loud and clear.

\*

They go on field trips sometimes.

It's what Samira calls it whenever they're out in the world, not at work or his apartment. He likes those times with her– they feel lighter, less complicated– and it's fun to pretend that they're just normal people, even if only for a couple of hours. They have a shared day off and rather than spend their time watching a bad action movie or lolling around, Samira's dragged him into the throes of her latest research endeavor, which involves combing through boxes and boxes of archival medical journals on a Saturday.

Of course, the archives aren't even open on Saturdays, but Samira had charmed her way into special research privileges with a shiny badge to match.

"You have to have this on at all times," she says, slapping a bright red 'visiting researcher' sticker against his chest, after she's scanned them in. She lets her hand linger against his chest for a moment longer than necessary and he hates himself a little for feeling mildly turned on by

the whole thing.

“There’s no one here.”

“Someone could come,” she says, “And when they ask why I have a fifty year old man following me around, I can just point to the sticker.”

“I can’t believe I’ve been demoted to visiting researcher. I think I should at least be an *assistant* researcher with how many boxes I’m about to read through.”

“I’ll upgrade you to my favorite person if you can find that 1973 article I told you about in the car.”

Jack finds it in under two hours.

“You’re kind of remarkable,” she grins and Jack thinks his insides might melt into themselves. She clutches the thick article between her hands as they head to the scanner to make a digital copy.

“They have a decent scanner here, better than the one at the hospital. You just flip through the pages and it automatically scans and emails a PDF to you based on your badge number,” she says as she bends down, staring at the machine as it whirs to life. “The emailing can take a while, especially for longer documents. Basement internet is painfully slow.”

“Fancy,” he notes, “How long should it take?”

“Like twenty minutes tops,” she replies.

He nods, “Sounds good.”

He makes himself busy, as Samira flips and scans each page. He occupies himself with a random doctor’s journal from the the 1930s, skimming through its contents haphazardly as he leaned against a nearby desk.

“I’ve been talking to Robby about fellowship applications,” she says, “I haven’t decided exactly where to apply, but he thinks having unique publications under my belt will give me a chance at the more competitive ones.”

“Any program would be beyond lucky to have you, Samira. The publications are just the cherry on top.”

“What’s grabbed your interest?” she asks, propping herself up on the desk beside him to peer at the journal.

He smirks, putting the journal down and turning to face her, “Nothing.”

“Really?” she asks, brow lifted.

“Well, maybe one thing...”

He leans over to brush a quick kiss against her cheek, but she pulls him close, pulling him over so his body is threaded between her legs.

“You know, the building is closed on Saturdays,” she mutters.

“So you said.”

“And I am wearing a skirt, you know...”

“I noticed,” he swallows, his hands grazing up and down her thighs.

“We have some time to kill...”

“Do we?” he says softly, though it comes out as more of a mangled groan. He thinks this is the first time in history someone’s been grateful for slow internet.

Her arms wrap around his neck as she pulls him in, pressing her chest up against his own and Jack wonders if she can feel his heart rattling around his ribcage, aching for her touch. He kisses her a little harder and sloppier than usual and laughs against her mouth when she matches his intensity with equal vigor. He splays his fingers against the curve of her skull, cradling the back of her head so he can lay her gently against the hard wood of the desk and for a moment he just admires the way her curls fan out as she grins up at him with that wanting, sinful smirk.

“When I shove this skirt up to your waist, what am I going to find, Samira?”

She bites her lip, deviously. “Why don’t you find out, visiting researcher?”

“I thought I’d been promoted to your favorite person?”

“Jack, you’re never not my favorite person,” she whispers.

And yeah, that does something to him. He slides the floaty fabric of her skirt up her thighs and as he had expected, no underwear.

“You are unbelievable,” he says, sinking to his knees, pressing alternating, butterfly-light kisses to each knee, then each thigh, and then to her needy cunt. He’s done this what feels like a thousand times and somehow, it’s never enough. It still feels like an entirely novel experience, like there’s no number of times that could ever make this feel anything less than holy.

Jack Abbot’s always taken issue with the phrase ‘standing up’ for what you believe in. It’s been thrown at him his entire life by his parents, the military, med school, and the like. He struggles with it because what no one ever says, is when you truly, truly believe in something, you kneel before it. Like God. Like the prettiest woman he’s ever seen. How could he not sink to the ground, and stay there, the sweet taste of her opening like a hard drug melting away the ache where his prosthetic meets his skin.

They’ll be a bruise there tomorrow, there always is. But what are bruises, if not proof of luck?

He’s not sure what he likes more the— the way she tastes or the way she squirms beneath him as he licks through her folds and sucks on her clit. Maybe it’s the way the base of her heels dig into his spine, the way she fists his hair, and whimpers his name when she comes. She does so, quite beautifully, when adds two fingers to match the rhythm of his tongue. All it takes is the slight crook at just the right angle and her hips are bucking right off the table, as she gasps his name in an indulgent moan.

All of this is to say, he’s very much enjoying himself, working her up to a second orgasm when he hears the soft ding of the scanner. He stops, looking up at her expectantly.

“Don’t you fucking stop, Jack Abbot.”

“Check your email, make sure it went through,” he says, for no other reason than to rile her up a bit more and because he takes pleasure in knowing he can.

“Asshole,” she bites out.

“Now, Samira, that’s no way to talk to your favorite person,” he teases. She gives him a look that’s one of his favorites (violent, a little murderous, even) but she checks her phone for the email.



“Got it,” she confirms.

“Good, then we can get back to the real business at hand.”

It's only when he's laying against the cool, wooden desk, watching up at the glorious image of Samira riding his cock, does the observation come to him.

“Does this count as the second time we've fucked against a tree?”

\*

Jack thinks about Samira a lot. More than he should.

He thinks about the perfect slope of her shoulders and the easy curve of her lips and how she holds his hard angles with such soft strength. He can't tell if that makes them strangers or just cosmically intertwined. He's already tumbled over the edge, crossed the point of no return, and it's why he knows she keeps that last little distance between them. She rarely stays the night when she isn't bone-exhausted and even when she does, she's usually slipping from his grasp by the crack of dawn.

It's why he's shocked when he's kissing her hard and hungry and she mumbles against his lips, “What are we?”

He forces himself to take a step back from her lithe body, though he instantaneously longs for her gentle warmth the moment he does so. He's too keenly aware of the fact it's not a question he can answer while he's touching her.

“Sorry,” she says, when the silence hangs as Jack shuffles through his thoughts trying to form the right words, “I don't know why I said that.”

*“I love you.”*

The words fly from his mouth like a guttural, chain reaction ripping from his heart to his throat before he can process them for what they are. “Sorry,” he echoes, looking at the floor, “Don't know why I said that.”

“You can take it back,” she says, something resembling a sigh escaping her lips.

“Is that what you want?”

“Yes,” she breathes. It feels a little like he’s been punched in the jugular.

“I take it back.”

Except he can’t, not really. Samira stays the night, but in the morning she’s gone.

\*

She doesn’t avoid him, per say. In fact, she doesn’t really avoid him at all. For all extensive purposes, nothing’s changed. She still texts him her schedule, Monday at noon, on the dot. She still smiles at him from across the OR like she’s holding the sun in the palm of her hands. But when she kisses him, the reckless abandon is gone. He can sense it—the measure in her movements, the subtle hesitation in her hands.

Her lips are on his neck and his brain is only half-functioning, but the half that’s operational needs clarity before he can fully succumb to the bliss.

“Where are you?” Samira asks like she can read his mind, and often Jack thinks it’s well within her capabilities.

“I’m here.” He takes her hand that’s settled on his upper thigh and links their fingers together. “But we can’t not talk about it forever, you know?”

She tilts her head, “What’s there to say? You took it back, we’re good. I promise.”

She leans forward to pick up where she’s left off, but he just gives her that knowing, half-smile that says the conversation is anything but over. Samira sighs, “It’s not that I don’t love you, Jack.”

He’s not sure what he’s expecting her to say, but it’s certainly not that.

“I mean I probably do...love you, too...if that even means anything,” she continues, “But this isn’t a relationship, Jack. Sure, we flirt, we fuck, and I trust you more than anyone I’ve ever met, but we can’t pretend like we’re not twenty years and a million HR violations apart.”

“It means a lot,” Jack says, not hearing much past the ‘love you, too.’ He does try to mull over the rest of her statement and he’s hard-

pressed to disagree. And yet, against every gallant bone in his body, he wants to.

“Besides, what are you even supposed to do with love?”

“I don’t think you’re supposed to *do* anything.”

“Well,” she hums, “I think some would argue you’re supposed to get married, have 2.5 kids, get a dog, and pitch a white picket fence.”

“Is that what you want?”

“God, no,” she says.

They’ve talked about marriage before. As a concept. Like it’s some strange entity, entirely separate from themselves. He thinks back to the diner where he tells Samira he’d probably never do it again. He tells her about Audrey and how they cobbled their little ceremony together in eight hours before getting deployed to two separate continents. He tells her how in a world that doesn’t stop moving forward, he can’t help but keep that last one thing in place for her.

*“You’re a real romantic, Jack,” Samira says, stealing the last two fries off his plate.*

*“You think you’ll ever get married?” he asked, snatching the yellowed pickle off her plate with his fork, knowing she’ll never touch it. Too bitter for her pretty lips.*

*“Maybe,” she shrugged, “It’s never been a priority for me, but I like the idea of it.”*

*“Well, I would probably have to hate the guy, but you’d look nice in white.”*

*“You wouldn’t hate him.”*

*“I’d be happy for you, but I would still hate him a little,” he chuckled, “Is that selfish?”*

*“Not selfish, just honest.”*

Even now, he reflexively tries to picture it– Samira in a sundress, shiny rock on her finger, a kid on each hip. It’s a nice picture, pleasant, if not for the fact Jack finds it terribly jarring. Somehow, domestic bliss feels all wrong on her. He replaces the vision in his mind with an image of her from earlier. She’s in scrubs, brows

furrowed in focus, hair pulled back with her favorite clip. He watches over her shoulder as she works through a difficult procedure, diligent and determined, as ever. As he's always known, the real Samira Mohan was far more appealing than any fucking Americana fantasy his mind could conjure.

He chuckles, "What do you want, then? For your life?"

"I want to be a *great* doctor. I just want to make real, meaningful changes to the system, however I can."

"Only you would put 'just' in front of that statement. Like changing the world for the better is some tiny, little feat."

"Is that not what we try to do every day?"

Jack smiles, "Maybe, but it's also just who you are. You're just one of those people."

"What do you mean?"

"You're one of those people who can actually change the world."

He could write several theses on everything else he wants to discuss with her, not just about their relationship, but her hopes, her dreams, her desires– the inevitable heights she'll reach. But she's kissing him again and this time he can taste the love on her tongue so he's fine with the blurred lines and half-answers if it means feeling this high on life– getting a taste of the flight only she's capable of.

He's different from her in this way and he knows it. Jack knows if he ever stops moving, if he ever stands still enough to look beyond the horizon, he'll sink. They speak the same language, share the same passions, but he's never been like her– all raw ambition and goodness. So he tries to be ground beneath her feet– steady, anchored, hard– surviving solely off the the fruit of quiet devotion and small victories, taking each day for what it is.

Samira sees beyond the end of the week. She reaches into the future with those perfect, meticulous hands with the hope she might mold it into something truly beautiful.

Jack doesn't know what to do except to love her for it.

Jack has a hard shift. There's a 12 car pile-up on the freeway- fire, flames, and debris everywhere.

He knows death. He's witnessed it at the hospital and seen it up close, far more often than he'd care to admit. He's witnessed real miracles, too but he's all cashed out by the start of the shift from Hell. It begins with a blaring siren in the distance and the clanging sound of metal as supplies and gurneys start rolling in and he's barking out orders like a drill sergeant.

There's a little boy who comes in the first ambulance, unlucky enough to arrive with a long, thick shard of glass implanted in his skull. He rushes over, only to watch his small, frail body crumple over lifelessly before he's even had a chance to ask a single question.

The night only gets worse from there.

When he gets home, he wants nothing more than to have her there, waiting. To fall into her arms and forget the past twelve hours of horror he can't get away from. Samira is, of course, still at the hospital. She scrubbed in thirty two minutes after the first alert went out and she wouldn't leave.

Even when he begged.

Even when he demanded.

Upon reflection, he knows it's hypocritical because they're both so alike in that way. They both have a preference (or really, an affliction) for storms over stillwater, because the wind, however wild, is what keeps them moving. He lays back in his bed after removing his prosthetic. The room spins a bit before the exhaustion sets in and he knocks out to a sleep that is anything but restful. He tosses and turns and wakes up in a cold sweat to the scent of strong coffee brewing downstairs. He's not entirely sure what it is- a cruel prolongation of an inescapable fate or the blessing of a lucky star, but he's alive and Samira's in his kitchen.

"Didn't think you would come," he says.

"I didn't want to be alone," she says. He can hear a bitterness in her voice, the bite in her tone. She's angry, he knows. But at least she's here.

"I'm glad you came."

She swivels to face him, “When you pulled rank and told me to leave, was that about you or me?”

“I don’t follow.”

“I’ll rephrase,” she says, evenly, “When you loudly demanded, in front of *everyone*, that I go home, was that about you or about me?”

“You were there for over nine hours, Samira. There was nothing staying another three would change,” he replies, quietly.

“You’re not answering my question.”

“Does it matter? You stayed.”

“Yeah, I stayed, Jack,” she says, “You don’t get to make those decisions for me.”

“I wasn’t trying to—”

“Just answer my question, then.”

“If you’re asking if I asked you to leave because I was worried about you crashing out in the hospital, the answer is yes,” he says, “And sure, maybe a stupid, selfish part of me needed you to leave for myself, but that place will consume you if you let it.”

“I know.”

When Samira says it, her face softens. He realizes it’s easy to overlook, but she’s got her hard edges, her demons, too. They stand quietly in the kitchen for a few moments. She silently pours two cups of coffee and slides a mug towards him— a peace offering, or an acceptance, perhaps. He takes a long sip, the warmth shooting down his throat, like a limp kick to his tired veins.

“You should get some rest,” he says, tilting his head for her to follow him to the living room as he takes a seat on the couch and places their twin mugs on the coffee table.

“I can’t sleep,” she says, tucking her feet beneath herself, as she takes a seat beside him. “I tried.”

“I know,” he mutters, as she lays her head on his shoulder. He strokes her hair, gently massaging his fingers through her thick curls and against her scalp.

“Are you okay?” she asks, looking up at him, and it catches him a bit off-guard.

“I’m fine,” he says. His therapist would say it’s a conditioned response, rather than an honest one, but when she’s nestled up against him this close, he feels more grateful than anything else.

“I don’t think you are,” she says, a flicker of concern wavering through her otherwise steady gaze. “Do you want to talk?”

“I appreciate that you talk to me, even when you’re upset and that you aren’t afraid to tell me exactly what’s on your mind,” he says. Jack knows that isn’t what she’s inviting, but he feels compelled to tell her, nonetheless.

“This might actually be my healthiest relationship, believe it or not,” she mumbles.

“So, we’re in a relationship now?” he says, lightly teasing. If she detects a glimmer of hope in his words, well then, that’s simply up for interpretation.

“No, definitely, not,” Samira replies, but she says it with a smile so bright that Jack feels a warmth spread across his chest and it’s enough to make him feel a little lighter on a very heavy day. She leans over, pressing a chaste peck against his lips. He nips back at her bottom lip and the kiss escalates into something more heated, more desperate and needy.

There’s no talking, not when she crawls over to straddle him, not when she tugs off his shirt and unhooks her bra in one swift motion. His tongue goes straight to her nipple, not waiting a moment to swirl around the bud. She moans and it’s fiercer than usual, hungry for his touch as she grinds against his lap.

His hands slip through the elastic of her waistband, digging into the flesh of her ass as she shoves him firmly against the back of the couch. It doesn’t take them long to tire of the fabric between them as she rises up so he can shove her pants over her hips and off completely, before she finally returns her weight to his lap.

Samira presses her bare chest against his own and a sigh tumbles from his lips as his tongue slides against hers. He idly runs his hands over the smooth expanse of her outer thighs before he moves one hand inwards, finding her dripping sex. He has to pause for a moment when he realizes how aroused she is, swallowing his inkling glee as he

teases a finger between her folds, testing, prodding but not entering quite yet.

She seems to grow impatient with his pace because she groans against his neck and drops one of her own hands to clit, as if to get to her destination faster. He shakes his head and grabs her wrist with his free hand, and brings it up to chest, “You’ve worked hard enough today, Samira.”

“Just let me take care of you,” he says, meeting her gaze. He thumbs her swollen lower lip with his free hand, waiting for her answer and when she breathes out a soft ‘okay,’ he smiles, before dragging a slow circle around her clit with his fingers. He takes his sweet time, finding a rhythm with his fingers as she lightly grinds against his hand and he suckles on whatever he can get his lips on– her collarbone, her nipples, the pulse point at her wrist.

“Jack,” she whispers, against his ear, “Jack, I’m really close.”

She comes so quietly he almost misses it. She muffles the sound of her pleasure, biting into his shoulder. He fucking loves her teeth on him. He hopes it’ll leave a mark– proof of life, proof of love.

“You good, Samira?” he asks, when she comes back to him, a little hazy, but at ease.

She nods, “Can I have you now?”

“You always have me.”

There’s not much left between them– just the thin fabric of his sweatpants as she pulls out his cock with her warm, tender hands. It’s already hard and pulsating and he has to hold in his growl when she spits in her hand and gives his length a few, hard strokes.

“Fuck, Samira,” he grunts, and Samira just nods as though she has no idea what she’s doing to him.

“Jack?” she says, like a question.

“Yeah?”

“I’d really like if you fucked me hard.”

“I think I can manage that.”

He can hear an airy giggle against his ear as he reaches out to pull her



impossibly closer and she presses the needy head of his cock at her entrance. She slides down on him and it's the closest thing to pure rapture he'll ever know. He thrusts upwards, chasing her perfect, hot, wetness, trying to hold on to whatever semblance of self-control he has left.

"I said *hard* , Jack," she pleads, like she's moaning scripture through gritted teeth.

He obeys, because how could he not, and his pace grows frenetic as she tosses her hair around and whines his name. He can feel her orgasm approaching, her walls clenching around his cock and he knows he isn't far behind.

"Let go, Samira," he kisses against her skin. He's demanded too much of her in the past twenty four hours, but this is the one command he won't feel guilty for.

She throws her head back and she comes, shivering and panting. Jack does his best to maintain the pace, but when he feels her collapse in his arms, he thrusts himself as deep inside of her as he can before finally accepting his own release. They stay in each other's arms as their heart rates slow and their bodies recover from the high, until she finally rolls off of him. She watches him for a full minute, with those gorgeous brown eyes, before she finally says something.

"It won't be the hospital that consumes me."

\*

Robby and Heather invite them over for dinner. It feels borderline illegal and Samira seems less than thrilled at the prospect, but with enough cajoling and threats of light blackmail, they both accept. He picks out a nice, expensive bottle of wine and Samira makes a salad in his kitchen. Jack only complains a little when she doesn't let him chop anything.

"This is so weird," Samira groans in the car. "Social dinner with *my boss* ."

"Robby is not going to be judging your diagnostic skills over chicken marsala."

"I'd feel better if he was," she retorts, "They're definitely sizing me up. Trying to figure out what we are, trying to see if I'm good for you."

“Good for me?” Jack barks out, unable to contain the laugh, “You’re kidding right?”

“They’re *your* friends, Jack.”

“I think Robby would have me institutionalized if I ever did anything to hurt you,” he admits, “And Heather wouldn’t even let me get that far. They’re just being nosy because I usually tell Robby everything, which of course, he shares with Heather. I’ve been pretty lock-and-key about us, which is hard because I kind of want to talk about you all the time.”

“Thank you,” she smiles, “I really do appreciate your discretion.”

Dinner is nice. Lighter than expected. They talk about silly things like their high school days and med school mishaps and first kisses.

“I was eighteen,” Samira says, “My freshman year of college my roommates decided to drag me out to a frat party on a Wednesday night. I got a little drunk, had my first kiss, and proceeded to take my biochem midterm the next morning at 8:00am. All said and done, it worked out okay because I got a 98% on the exam, which the department head said was practically unheard of.”

“What was his name?” Heather asks.

“Professor Obi, I think,” she replies, “He’s a Dean or Regent or something like that, now.”

“I meant the frat boy.”

“Oh, I have no idea.”

“Well, looks like Abbot’s the romantic one,” Robby chuckles. “He can recall every last detail about his, which is impressive considering it happened...three and a half decades ago?”

“Hey, don’t knock her story,” Abbot smirks, because he gets her. He gets Samira Mohan in ways she doesn’t even understand herself. “The real romance is in her brilliance, isn’t it?”

\*

“I don’t know how to get out of this bed,” Samira says one afternoon, wrapped up in his arms, limb-locked. Normally, by this time she’s gone, but they’re both coming off an aligned week of night shifts and

she hasn't gone back to her apartment, once.

"So stay," he mumbles into her hair.

She snuggles herself deeper. He thinks he could stay like this forever.

"I have to talk to you about something."

"What's up?" Jack says, attempting to remain even, but his body betrays him when his muscles tense up, as if to hold on to her even tighter.

"I've been applying to fellowships."

"I had no idea," he jokes. It's all she's been talking about the past few months and the excitement in her voice has been nothing short of electric. She's been cagey about the specifics, referencing all sorts of superstitions that he can't quite follow, but he's certain only good is to come.

"And I've been accepted to two."

"Samira, that's fantastic!"

"One is in California," she says. "It's the best in the nation for emergency medicine. They're doing experimental, minority-centered clinicals..."

"Oh," is all he can manage.

"I think I'm going to say yes."

She looks at him, like she's waiting for him to say something. He swallows the lump in his throat and says, "*That's great, Samira,*" like a real fucking liar.

He knows.

She knows it.

They both know it.

\*

"I could move to California."

"No, you couldn't."

“I could. The warm weather would be better for my joints.”

“Jack, stop.”

“Samira, I’m being serious.”

“I know you are but just stop, okay? You’re making this harder than it already is.”

He stops. It’s not just because she’s asked, but because she’s right.

\*

They break up over four days.

It’s a series of baby steps that inches towards an end that is more quiet than cataclysmic. He knows it’s over before she says anything. He knows it the last time they make love because she fucks him like she’s saying goodbye. When she falls apart beneath him, body shuddering, eyes welling up, he gently kisses her tears away. He drives her to the airport an hour later and the car is dead silent.

*What are you even supposed to do with love?*

Her words ring through his ears as they fly by an underpass. He keeps asking himself the question, like some premonition or answer might slap him in the face or choke a braver man’s words from his throat. Because that’s the thing, isn’t it? He loves her, but it’s not enough to change the whims of the wind. He loves her, and so he cannot ask her to stay. He loves her, but he cannot leave.

He keeps hoping that something will change, that like a movie, a last second twist of fate will send them barreling towards a beautiful, happy ending of their own design. How could they choose to love each other in a world where love doesn’t conquer all? How could he, against all odds, love again and lose her, anyway?

It hits him, when she’s gone, the plane’s in the sky, and he’s sitting in the car alone, heater blasting like it might help the heaviness pass.

He loves her because it’s not enough.

\*

Routine takes over, in the way only routine can. He’s grateful for it.

He checks his phone after every shift, waiting for a missed call, a text

or two. She doesn't text him, not really. He gets a birthday text and photo of the Pacific Ocean, but mostly it's months of nothing. His finger grows familiar with hovering over the call button, but he doesn't ever actually hit it because he's frightened of what he'll say if he does.

He does a poor job of hiding it because Heather insists on setting him up with a former finance colleague. He says yes, not because he wants to, but because she'll keep asking, keep pitying him until he does, so why not rip off the band-aid now?

They go to a nice restaurant. They talk about life and art and their respective crafts. She's pretty, smart, and a half year younger. He likes her, so they date like adults their age do— the odd dinner and walks through the park. He brings her flowers once, because it feels like the right thing to do. He feels a little bad after the fourth date because she says that she really likes him and he doesn't know how to tell her that the catalogue of his mind is already too full with every look, every smile, every word of another woman.

He says he'll call her. He does, later, but only to tell he doesn't think he can see her again and then opens the weather app to see if it's raining in Palo Alto.

\*

Samira breaks first, if there's even anything left to break.

He's working a double shift, so he doesn't see his phone for almost twenty four full hours. So when he sees the three missed calls and voicemail, he nearly drops his phone.

He presses his phone to his ear like a desperate man, and when he hears the crack in her voice when she says his name, he decides he can't listen, so he just reads the transcription instead: *Hey, Jack. Had a hard day. Just wanted to hear your voice. Fuck. I— sorry to be a bother. You know what, I'm the worst. Please don't worry about calling me back. I'm fine, really.*

For the first time, he hits the call button with hesitation because he's Jack Abbot and he'll look at the sun just to feel it's warmth, even if it blinds him.

She answers immediately. "I said not to call back."

"You picked up," he counters.

“Yeah, well, give a drowning girl a break.”

And so, they settle into a new in-betweenness. A new almost. A new something that might be. He can't tell if it's more or less ruinous than their first go around, but he also doesn't really care. Her voice is a drug and if he's to have an addiction, then better her than something cruel. It's probably how it was always meant to go, to love her from this safe distance. He decides it to be a necessary space, like the space between his ribs, his lungs, and the chambers of his heart.

It's funny how even the darkest spaces will seek the light of day.

\*

He sees her at a conference in California from across the room. The sunlight skims her cheeks with a kiss of soft light. She's radiant— the reality of seeing her shines brighter than any memory he clings on to.

She doesn't see him, not until later in the evening. It's to be expected. She's the woman of the hour, her face plastered on every sign, every poster, every inch of his fucking mind.

“Ah, Samira. I want you to meet someone. This is Dr. Abbot,” comes the introduction. Jack studies his face— no name comes to mind, but the face is familiar enough. “I believe you both worked at PTMC around the same time. Ever cross paths?”

“Once or twice on the night shift,” she says, shaking his hand firmly, professionally. *Strangers*. She doesn't avoid his gaze. *Cosmically intertwined*.

“As I'm sure you've heard, Dr. Mohan is our Rising Star Fellow of the year,” the man says. “A very impressive accomplishment in a particularly competitive group, if I might add.”

Jack nods, “I read all the submissions. It's well deserved, Dr. Mohan. The archival research was an impressive touch.”

She grins and it feels so familiar. He longs to reach out, to really feel her warmth just one more time, but he resists, even when Dr. No-Name is dragged away by a gaggle of hospital administrators, leaving the two of them alone.

There's a million words on the tip of his tongue, a million more he knows will stay unsaid.

“How’s it feel to fly, Samira?”

She smiles, like she knows she's got two hands-- one for the world, one for his heart.

(She does.)

## End Notes

This is pretty angsty and quite different from my other Mohabbot fic, but I think part of why I love Jack and Samira is because I love how they are SO similar but also deeply different people and I wanted to explore how those similarities and differences might manifest within their relationship. So yeah, I don't think this is a happy fic but it's also not a totally sad one? Love it? Hate it? Drop me a comment and maybe come chat with me on Tumblr if you want more of my rambling thoughts @dazzlingsuns <33333

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